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ANDERSON MAN INDICTED ON CROSS BURNING

SACRAMENTO -- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, Anderson Police Chief Neil Purcell, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, Special Agent In Charge (SAC) Keith Slotter announced today that a federal grand jury returned a three-count indictment charging CHRISTOPHER DALE EASLEY, 22, of Anderson, California, with conspiracy to violate civil rights, interference with housing rights, and use of fire to commit a felony, based on an act of cross burning on the front lawn of an African American family's home.

Said United States Attorney Scott, "It is incomprehensible that such vile acts of bigotry are committed in 2004 in California. This office and the United States Department of Justice stand committed to working with the Anderson Police Department and the FBI to redress this grievous wrong."

The indictment alleges that on December 21, 2003, EASLEY and a juvenile left pieces of wood at the Anderson home of the African-American family with the writing "Burn Nigger," "SS," and several swastika symbols, and that on January 2, 2004, they transported an eight-foot wooden cross to the home, doused it with gasoline, erected it on the front lawn, and set it on fire.

Anderson Police Chief Neil J. Purcell stated, "This repulsive and cowardly conduct cannot, and will not be tolerated in our community."

SAC Slotter commented, "Civil Rights violations, particularly hate crimes, are a top priority within the FBI. They will not be tolerated, and will be investigated by this office in an

aggressive manner.”

If convicted, the maximum penalty under federal law for conspiracy to violate civil rights and for interference with housing rights is up to 10 years in prison on each count. Additionally, using fire to commit a felony carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, which must be served consecutively to any other sentence. Each charge also carries a fine of up to \$250,000 and a three year term of supervised release.

The charges are only allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case is the product of a joint investigation by the Anderson Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Benjamin Wagner and Matthew Stegman.

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